

BUILDING COMMUNITY COALITIONS

Coalitions are made up of an alliance of people representing diverse organizations who work together to achieve a common goal. Bolster your **National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)** campaign by creating a coalition to promote educational resources about substance use and mental disorders, treatment, and recovery. Conduct comprehensive research to find groups and individuals across the country who share your mission. Use social networking tools to educate and unite more people by expanding the reach of your coalition beyond your local community.

Millions of people of every race, age, gender, workplace, geography, or socioeconomic level suffer from substance use and mental disorders, and recovery is possible. With online and community support, you can reach these groups faster, easier, and more conveniently.

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), this year's **Recovery Month** campaign, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,"** emphasizes that all Americans have the opportunity to access provisions within the Affordable Care Act and Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA). These laws aim to improve physical and emotional health while ensuring people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost. The passage of the MHPAEA provides parity, or the recognition by all insurance services—both public and private—that substance use and mental disorders are treated comparably to other physical health and medical conditions. Additionally, public awareness will increase access for those in need of essential substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, ultimately improving the overall health and well-being of people in the United States.

How to Begin

Coalitions unite leaders who represent different constituencies, such as elected or appointed officials and business, educational, health services, social, and religious groups. They bring together grassroots organizations and people with a shared interest in achieving a mutual goal or need.

Participate in coalition activities by:

- Building your own if there is no active coalition that meets your needs
- Joining and supporting the **Recovery Month** efforts of a community coalition that already exists

Creating a new coalition provides you with more control and the ability to plan and implement your vision for your initiative. On the other hand, uniting with an existing coalition will save upfront planning time and allows you to quickly enhance existing efforts to celebrate **Recovery Month**. Remember that joining coalitions comprised of groups with different goals from your own may be useful. For example, partnering with a coalition whose focus is on preventing substance use and mental disorders, if your organization does not address that area, might offer a significant opportunity for your organization to branch out. Continue your coalition after your **Recovery Month** event concludes to strengthen support and collaboration of resources in your community.

Refer to the following tips to create or partner with a coalition in line with the goals of **Recovery Month**:

- **Decide specifically what issues related to substance use and mental disorders you want to address.** How are these problems being handled? For example, are there treatment and recovery resources in your community that address the specific needs of various populations? Engage policymakers, families, people in recovery, and health care providers in the dialogue to enhance treatment options and recovery support services.
- **Determine what resources are already available and what groups are currently involved online, in your community, and nationwide. Compare that with your own goals and resources.** Consider people in the public and private sectors who might make influential and positive contributions to your **Recovery Month** coalition. Find organizations to partner with, such as prevention, treatment, and recovery support services; law enforcement; and other social and educational agencies. Other organizations that have the resources and expertise needed to build a successful coalition around substance use and mental disorders include:

- ❑ Adult independent living communities
- ❑ Treatment and recovery organizations
- ❑ Child welfare organizations
- ❑ Criminal justice system
- ❑ Foundations and volunteer groups
- ❑ Government agencies
- ❑ Health-related organizations
- ❑ Individual and family therapists
- ❑ Mental health organizations
- ❑ National and local media outlets
- ❑ Private companies/businesses
- ❑ Recovery bloggers
- ❑ Recovery community
- ❑ Recovery and peer-to-peer support groups
- ❑ Schools, universities, and educational community
- ❑ Veterans' associations

Research all organizations before inviting them to join to ensure their mission aligns with yours. It's important that the relationship is mutually beneficial. For a coalition to be most effective, each member must be committed to the mission and work collaboratively. Online collaboration tools make it easier, allowing people to work remotely, rather than at the same location.

- **Recruit members to the coalition.** Contact your coalition's potential allies and invite them to join your coalition, or ask if they are already involved with one you could join. Be sure to reference any existing connections you have with members of their organizations. When you recruit people to participate in your effort, have substantive materials to show them, describe your mission, and ensure they have a specific role in the coalition. The following tools will help to build your coalition from the ground up and recruit members:

- ❑ Social media, such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) or Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>)
- ❑ Email
- ❑ A website encouraging people to join
- ❑ Virtual meetings
- ❑ Online services to organize meetings simultaneously across the country, such as <http://www.meetup.com>

- **Confirm the coalition participants** and evaluate whether you have included a diverse panel of organizations that work with different groups in the community. Participation commitments can be informal verbal agreements or formal written contracts among the members, depending on the scope of the collaboration. For the coalition to be successful, keep in mind these guidelines:

- ❑ Be respectful of time commitments
- ❑ Allow all members to have an active role in planning and decision-making
- ❑ Set priorities and goals
- ❑ Agree on a communication process and responsibility for maintaining it
- ❑ Communicate and meet regularly
- ❑ Prepare a budget for activities and determine who will manage it
- ❑ Have a main contact person to coordinate members
- ❑ Decide the coalition's leadership early in the coalition's development

A solid leadership team needs to oversee the coalition and ensure the efficient and timely execution of the coalition's plan, while fostering communication and a clear sense of the coalition's direction.

- **Grade your coalition and celebrate its successes.** See a Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) resource, which can be found at <http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/evaluation-primer>, for tools to assess the effectiveness of your collaborative partnership efforts. Share your successes by posting your event materials, photos, and videos on **Recovery Month** social media outlets such as the **Recovery Month** Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/recoverymonth>), YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/recoverymonth>), and Twitter account (<http://twitter.com/recoverymonth>). Refer to the “**New Media Glossary**” and “**Developing Your Social Network**” documents in this toolkit for ideas on how to use these online tools.

The Affordable Care Act gives Americans more freedom and control over their health care, as well as new benefits that ensure people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost. Below you can find some general provisions on the new law, some of which are effective immediately, while others will be enacted by 2020. Refer to “Fast Facts About Health Reform, Substance Use and Mental Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery” in this toolkit for more information.

- Medicaid, a health program for low income individuals and families, will expand its eligibility to 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and all newly eligible parents and adults without children will receive benefits, which include essential substance use and mental health services at parity.
- Insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage due to a pre-existing condition for children starting in 2011, and for adults in 2014.
- Starting in 2011, young people, up to age 26, can remain on their parents' health insurance policy.
- Most health plans will cover some important preventive services at no additional cost to you, including counseling for a substance use or mental disorder.

Successful Partnerships to Model

Community coalitions have supported prevention, treatment, and recovery issues for years. The **Recovery Month** observance has its own coalition made up of the **Recovery Month** Planning Partners. Organized in 1997, the Planning Partners include more than 130 groups involved in the prevention, treatment, and recovery from substance use and mental disorders. The group meets quarterly to establish goals and set priorities for **Recovery Month** every year. For a list of the Planning Partners, refer to the “Planning Partners” directory in this toolkit.

Additionally, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the U.S. Department of Justice fund hundreds of community partnerships throughout the country. In 2009, the CADCA estimated that there were more than 5,000 operational anti-drug coalitions in the United States.

The following are addiction and other health-related coalition examples that will help guide you in the coalition-building process:

- **Mental Health America of Indiana** – Accessed at http://www.mhai.net/MHAI_page.htm, this organization promotes the mental health and recovery of all Indiana citizens through educational programs to increase public understanding and acceptance of people with a substance use disorder or mental health problem.
- **Addiction Coalition** – Accessed at <http://www.addictioncoalition.org>, this coalition is committed to stopping addiction in Central Alabama by raising community awareness and accelerating communication among professionals fighting addiction.
- **Ohio Citizen Advocates** – Accessed at <http://www.oca-ohio.org/MailingList.asp>, this group works to eliminate the misconceptions associated with alcohol and other drug addiction by educating the public that addiction is a preventable, treatable medical illness.

Recovery Month Planning Partner Resources

The following are **Recovery Month** Planning Partner organizations that you can use as resources to create successful coalitions.

Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of New York State (ASAPNY)

This nonprofit membership association consists of coalitions, programs, and agencies throughout New York State that provide substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and research.

518-426-3122

<http://www.asapnys.org>

American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)

This association works exclusively for licensed mental health counselors by advocating for legislation that expands, enhances, and protects the right to practice; promotes mental health awareness; and builds the profession of mental health counseling nationally.

800-326-2642

703-548-6002

<http://www.amhca.org>

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

This organization builds and strengthens the capacity of community coalitions to create safe, healthy, and drug-free communities. It supports members with technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies, conferences, and special events.

800-54-CADCA (22322) (Toll-Free)

703-706-0560

<http://www.cadca.org>

Faces & Voices of Recovery

This national recovery advocacy organization mobilizes people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, families, friends, and allies in campaigns to end discrimination and make recovery a reality for even more Americans.

202-737-0690

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>

Mental Health America (MHA)

This is the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization addressing all aspects of mental health and mental illness. With more than 320 affiliates nationwide, MHA works to improve the mental health of all Americans through advocacy, education, research, and service.

703-684-7722

<http://www.nmha.org>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)

This national nonprofit membership and affiliate organization is the advocate and voice for children and families impacted by alcoholism or drug dependency in the family. NACoA provides training, evidence-based programs, materials, and public policy guidance to facilitate substance use prevention and recovery support for all impacted family members.

888-55-4COAS (2627) (Toll-Free)

301-468-0985

<http://www.nacoa.org>

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)

Founded in 1944, NCADD and its Affiliate Network is a voluntary health organization dedicated to fighting the Nation's #1 health problem—alcoholism, drug addiction and the devastating consequences of alcohol and other drugs on individuals, families, and communities. NCADD focuses on increasing public awareness and understanding of the disease through education, prevention, information/referral, intervention, treatment services, advocacy, and recovery support services, and has helped millions of individuals and family members into recovery.

800-NCA-CALL (622-2255) (Hope Line)

212-269-7797

<http://www.ncadd.org>

National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC)

This public-private effort promotes awareness and recognition of the under-publicized problem of inhalant use. It serves as an inhalant referral and information clearinghouse, stimulates media coverage about inhalant issues, develops informational materials and a newsletter, provides training and technical assistance, and leads a week-long national grassroots education and awareness campaign.

800-269-4237

423-265-4662

<http://www.inhalants.org>